



**State of the Town Address  
Mayor Ronnie Williams  
January 20, 2015**

Council members, staff and fellow citizens, I am honored to be your mayor and consider it a privilege to once again deliver the State of the Town address to you.

It has been another great year in Garner. We continue to receive accolades that affirm Garner's outstanding quality of life, while companies such as Overland Contracting are choosing Garner as the place to locate their business.

In 2014, we started implementing the bond program that was overwhelmingly approved by voters the previous year, and we are putting our bond funds to wise and productive use. In 2014, we saw evidence of increasing commercial investment in Garner – and we are anticipating more great things in the coming months and years at Highway 70 and White Oak, in our historic downtown, and at the Garner Technology Center.

In addition to the new investment, Garner continues to prosper because so many small businesses are keeping the local economy strong and are giving back to the community in a multitude of ways.

Yes, these are exciting times in Garner, and I am here to tell you that the best is yet to come.

In 2014, the Town started construction on a new police station and began planning and design work for a new indoor recreation center in downtown and a new Town Hall on the existing Town Hall campus. These are three of our major bond projects. Some of those projects have been talked about for decades – now they are becoming real.

The bonds are funding other things as well, such as the road improvements at Highway 70 near Jessup Drive, dog parks, sidewalks, dugout covers and property acquisitions needed to bring the Historic Downtown Garner Plan to fruition.

You will see some of these bond projects – most notably, the police station and a new dog park in Garner Recreational Park – completed in 2015. And you will see groundbreakings for the new Town Hall and indoor recreation center as the year progresses.

In 2014, essential road improvements were made at Interstate 40, Highway 70 and White Oak Road, thanks to a funding partnership involving the town, NCDOT and CAMPO. That investment in infrastructure both enhances motorist safety and enables new development in that area.

In the spring, Cabela's will open its first store in North Carolina at Highway 70 and White Oak. Several new restaurants will be opening there as well – Carolina Ale House, Longhorn Steakhouse, Five Guys Burgers and Fries, City Barbecue and more to come.

The Town is investing taxpayer dollars in other ways that yield excellent return on investment. In 2014, the Town spent money to replace old streetlights with new LED lights. The cost of the project will be approximately \$72,000, but the Town will save over \$67,000 annually in energy costs. That's the kind of return on investment that we're constantly seeking.

All of these projects, all of this investment in our infrastructure, all of the private investment that will follow – these will form the core of an impressive story of growth and progress.

And yet, we must never lose sight of what makes Garner such a great place to be – its people, its history, its unrivaled community spirit.

In 2014, about 50 of our citizens successfully completed the Garner 101 citizens academy. Meeting these wonderful, engaged citizens – who were motivated to attend 10 weekly classes to learn how their town works – reminded me why we are an All-America City.

Our service partners are also a big reason why Garner is an All-America City. 2014 was a year of nurturing relationships with those service partners. Our efforts resulted in even stronger relationships with Garner Volunteer Fire-Rescue, the Garner Chamber of Commerce and the Garner Revitalization Association.

We also continued to work closely with organizations such as the Towne Players, Garner Baseball Incorporated, the Doctor Martin Luther King Junior Annual Celebration Committee, and others to make Garner a great place to be.

We are also proud of our schools here in Garner and know that our community cannot move forward unless our schools are successful. That's why we are especially excited to note that in 2014, Garner Magnet High earned Best High Schools Bronze status from U.S. News & World Report for the third consecutive year.

We are grateful for the investment Wake County Public Schools is making in our community by building a new high school and elementary school in Garner – and by planning a total renovation of Garner Magnet High. These investments will help move our community forward.

Another of the Town's key partners is the Garner Economic Development Corporation. That's the entity working to redevelop the former ConAgra site, now named the Garner

Technology Center. The center is the premier industrial site in Wake County with 98 acres on I-40, all utilities on site and an incentive package worth millions of dollars.

We are looking forward to seeing this site redeveloped by a company or companies that bring good jobs to our community and bolster our tax base.

Town staff continued to provide outstanding and award-winning service in 2014.

Garner's Public Works Department became the first agency in the state – let me repeat this, the first in the state – and only the 95<sup>th</sup> in North America to earn accreditation from the American Public Works Association. Meanwhile, the Garner Police Department earned its seventh reaccreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies.

Also in 2014, the Garner Senior Center earned recertification as a Center of Excellence from the state of North Carolina. These are just some of the indicators of what a great job Town staff do each and every day serving Garner taxpayers.

I want to take a minute to remember some former employees whom we lost in 2014 and the beginning of this year: Robert Griffis, John Bridges, Betty Perry and Rex Todd. The town is a much better place today because of their service. We will miss each of them.

I also want to commend the Town Council and their continuing service to Garner. Serving on the Council is in itself a major time commitment, yet each of the Council members still finds time to give back to the community in other ways, such as serving in civic groups, coaching youth sports and being active in their churches.

I am exceptionally proud to work with this Council. They are outstanding public servants.

Our town has experienced incredible growth in recent years. Our population has increased by almost 50 percent since 2000 – and Garner's rapid growth is expected to continue.

As we move forward, managing this growth will at times be a delicate balancing act. Garner will change. There will be many new additions to our town. But we will strive to retain Garner's essential character – the community spirit and hometown feel that make Garner special.

And we will do this by working with our service partners, with our local businesses, and, most important, with you, our citizens. Together, we will make Garner an even greater place to be, and we will continue to embody those values that make Garner an All-America City.

Thank you. May God bless you and may God continue to bless Garner.

###